

# NEWS

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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## **DELAWARE OBSERVES NATIONAL HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS WEEK**

*Workshops planned in Rehoboth and Newark*

With parts of Delaware still suffering the effects of last year's coastal storm season, Hurricane Preparedness Week, May 16-22, takes on a special meaning this year. The week of information and activities will include proclamations and workshops throughout the state.

Public workshops are scheduled at the Rehoboth Beach Convention Center, 9 a.m. – 12 noon, Tuesday, May 18, and 9 a.m. – 12 noon, Thursday, May 20, at the Conectiv Conference Center, 4100 South Wakefield Drive, Newark. Both workshops are free and open to all. Presentation topics include a 2004 hurricane forecast from the National Weather Service, the effects of coastal storms on Atlantic and bay beaches and the history of hurricanes in Delaware. Other relevant topics are evacuation decisions and preparedness measures Delawareans can take to better weather the storm.

On Monday, May 17, Dr. Wendy Carey, Coastal Hazards specialist, Sea Grant Program, University of Delaware, will host a free public information seminar in the Wilmington Public Library from 11-11:45 a.m. Her presentation precedes a noon Hurricane Awareness and Preparedness Week proclamation signing in Rodney Square. Carey will discuss topics including how hurricanes develop, what causes severe coastal and inland damage during a hurricane and actions to take to be better prepared.

On the agenda for the Rehoboth Beach workshop, Tony Pratt will address coastal flooding and storm effects on beaches. An Environmental Program Manager with the DNREC Division of Soil and Water, Pratt will give an overview of recent tropical storms and their impacts on Delaware's coastal environments. Storms of note that he will include are Hurricane Gloria (1985), Hurricane Bob (1991), Hurricane Grace - hybrid storm (1991) and Hurricane Floyd (1999). Also, Pratt will discuss Hurricane Isabel (2003) and the potential impacts if Isabel had made a direct hit on the Delmarva peninsula.

Also in Rehoboth, representatives from DelDOT South, Delaware State Police and Sussex County Emergency Management Agency will lead a panel discussion on evacuation decisions and responsibilities.

Kelvin Ramsey, University of Delaware, is one of the speakers at the Newark workshop. His presentation will focus on the fact that many of the hurricanes that have affected Delaware actually cause more damage inland than they do at the coast. The historic Hurricane of 1878 as an example that Ramsey will compare with Hurricane Isabel, which he classifies as an example of "We just missed really being hit." Included in his presentation are segments on the flooding associated with hurricanes such as Agnes and Floyd and of the remnants of Henri.

Ramsey said, "The greatest damage from these hurricanes is related to wind destruction and stream flooding. Just because a hurricane does not make landfall in Delaware, and they historically have not, does not mean that the state does not feel the effects of them."

Since the combined damages of Isabel and Henri in Delaware exceed \$12 million, state and local officials have plenty to consider as a season of above average hurricane activity approaches. For 2004, the

National Hurricane Center predicts eight hurricanes, including three intense storms of sustained winds of 111 mph or greater.

Following Isabel and Henri, both federally declared disasters in Delaware, 670 households registered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency helpline serving state residents. Of those, more than 275 represented homeowners in Glenville who lost their homes to floods.

Lona Bryan, Delaware Emergency Management Agency, will discuss effects of flooding and factors in loss. She will present information on federal public and individual assistance available to victims of natural disasters. She is a speaker at both free workshops.

Glenn Gillespie, acting director of Delaware Emergency Management Agency, said, "We can't stop storms, but we can make plans and take actions that will reduce the effects of a hurricane disaster. We hope the public will take advantage of activities during Hurricane Awareness and Preparedness Week and help make themselves and our state safer."

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Notes: The address of the Conectiv Conference Center in Newark is 4100 South Wakefield Drive. It is referred to as the Chapman Road facility and is just off of Chapman Road, southwest of the intersection of I-95 and Rt. 273.

The "Demo House," featuring hurricane shutters and other storm resistant features will be at the Rehoboth Convention Center on May 18. This house was constructed using funds from the Project Impact program in Lewes.

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